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Journal of Urban History 2002; 28: 300
DOI: 10.1177/009614420228003002

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NEW YORK AVENUE The Life and Death of Gay Spaces in Atlantic City, New Jersey, 1920-1990

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Before casino gambling brought Donald Trump, Merv Griffin, and Steve Wynn to Atlantic City, author John McPhee wrote about an imaginary visit to the town during an imaginary Monopoly game.¹ Hunched over the rectangular board for days on end in the late 1970s, McPhee and his wily, blurry-eyed, unnamed opponent rolled the dice, moved the toy car and little tin thimble, and landed on the streets of Atlantic City. In this version of Monopoly, they really did land on Atlantic City streets. When they hit on the green property North Carolina Avenue, they somehow slipped through the board onto the real North Carolina Avenue. They could see the aging Chalfonte Haddon Hotel, feel the cool ocean breezes, and smell the mix of cotton candy and roasted peanuts wafting over from the Boardwalk. When they turned the corner past "GO," they hit Oriental Avenue—a light blue property. From there they moved past Tennessee Avenue over to Ohio Avenue and down and across Atlantic and Pacific Avenues to Park Place. Yet it didn't really matter where they ended up. Whether they found themselves on a purple property or a red or yellow one, or even on the coveted blue Boardwalk, they saw the same sad scenes in the real Atlantic City: unemployment lines, gutted buildings, cracked sidewalks, and barren lots. The Atlantic City McPhee visited was not a pulsating world of cowering capitalists but an all too familiar scene from the 1970s—a declining urban area.

McPhee and his Monopoly partner never landed on the orange property, New York Avenue. If they had, they would have seen another side of urban decline. Tucked between Pacific Avenue and the Boardwalk, the beach block of south New York Avenue and the adjacent Westminster Avenue came to life in the early 1970s. This area shook, boogied, and rocked while the rest of the city rotted away from neglect. The bars, boutiques, and restaurants along New York Avenue did booming business. On summer nights, clubs were packed so

AUTHOR'S NOTE: I could not have written this essay without the remarkably helpful suggestions of Moshe Shulovskiy, Jim Green, Marc Stein, Jim Giesen, Claudio Saunt, and David Goldfield.

JOURNAL OF URBAN HISTORY, Vol. 28 No. 3, March 2002 300-327

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tight that the overflow of dancers spilled into the street. The sounds of Donna Summer and the Village People filled the air. Only when the sun came up did the disco beat fade. By then, the revelers were sipping coffee and eating fried egg sandwiches at one of the little cafés that dotted the street.

McPhee somehow missed New York Avenue. Maybe he never rolled the right number or maybe the street was invisible to him. New York Avenue was the heart of gay Atlantic City—a beach resort for women and men from Philadelphia, New York, Wilmington, and Baltimore, and it burned bright until it was swallowed up by the ferocious greed unleashed by casino gambling and the grim reality created by the spread of AIDS. But McPhee probably didn't see New York Avenue because it didn't neatly fit into his narrative of urban decline.

Historians of postwar American cities have generally told stories that follow the arch of McPhee's plot line. Traveling along scholarly paths laid out by Jon Teaford, Kenneth Jackson, and Thomas Sugrue, urban historians generally begin their account in the final days before the fall of downtown and front-porch-centered city neighborhoods.² From there, they show how the pernicious forces of disinvestment, deindustrialization, and finally white flight have destroyed the nation's urban spaces. Often the narratives end with a final sad picture of a now empty, but once great, city. The story of the rise and fall of New York Avenue, however, highlights an overlooked counternarrative of place making, and not just decline, in postwar urban history.³

Urban decline is not, and never was, a one-way street. While some people were driving out of town, never to come back, others were moving into the houses and apartments they abandoned. To be sure, disinvestment, deindustrialization, and white flight ate away at community after community across the United States in the decades after World War II, but these same forces simultaneously created opportunities. Across the country, people of color and lesbians and gay men moved into devalued, deserted spaces and remade them into new spaces. This process of opportunistic reconfiguration is exactly what happened with the New York Avenue gay scene. When longtime white tourists and residents fled Atlantic City after World War II, gay men—themselves mostly white—stepped into the void and brought life to this corner of the decaying city. For a ten-year stretch from 1970 to 1980, New York Avenue was probably the most exciting and alive place in town.

Examining the history of New York Avenue over much of the past century sheds light not only on the complicated nature of postwar cities but also on the intertwined histories of gay men and urban spaces. For starters, the queer history of Atlantic City shows gay men at play and on vacation and adds to the growing literature on gay tourism.⁴ This same story contributes to the larger history of gay men in postwar America. Like most studies of gay men after World War II, this is an urban history. Like gay men elsewhere, gay men (and, to a lesser extent, lesbians) in Atlantic City faced persistent harassment from

the police and alcohol control boards. Eventually, however, they created a distinct, vibrant, and economically diverse space in the city. But this story is more than simply a detailed examination of an outsider community in the making. It is, rather, the broader story of the development of a community set against the backdrop of shifting urban geographies, fluctuating real estate prices, and racialized and sexualized notions of property and worth. By looking at Atlantic City's gay tourist scene in the context of urban change, then, we can see in a way that few gay urban studies have yet to illuminate the close relationship between urban economies and the expansion and destruction of gay spaces.⁵

The history of New York Avenue points, furthermore, to the limits of gambling, however currently popular, as an engine of urban revival. Beginning in the late 1970s, state lawmakers in New Jersey promised that casinos would resuscitate Atlantic City, filling its streets and buildings with well-heeled tourists and new residents. So far, the promises have not panned out. The city's twelve casinos have created thousands of new jobs, paid tens of millions in taxes, and transformed the Boardwalk into a shimmering strip of neon-splashed towers. Yet the steady stream of slot machine quarters and blackjack dollars rolling into town have done more to destroy the city than rebuild it. Instead, the fast-growing casino industry helped to obliterate many of the urban spaces that existed before it first came to town in 1978, including the rambunctious street life of gay Atlantic City. The story of the life and death of New York Avenue, then, is a story of development and decay that complicates prevailing historical narratives of postwar cities and gay communities.

For straights and for gays, Atlantic City has always been a fantasy city. Like their counterparts in Coney Island and Fire Island, Atlantic City business leaders created a leisure landscape that allowed visitors to shed their own skins for a few days and try on different personalities and identities. Atlantic City turned itself into the "World's Playground" by specializing in the production of one particular illusion. The city's built environment functioned as a stage on which white middle-class women and men, especially the children of European immigrants, could act out their fantasies of wealth, elegance, and getting ahead in America.⁶

Tucked onto the northern end of a thin barrier island fifty miles east of Philadelphia, Atlantic City never was a blue-blood resort or a summer place for the country club set. While it wasn't Newport, it wasn't Coney Island either; that is, it wasn't a working-class destination for day trips.⁷ Instead, Atlantic City catered to the children of Italian, Irish, Russian, and Polish immigrants on their way out of the working class and now wealthy enough to spend a week or so away from their jobs. A local resident observes of typical 1950s tourists, "They were accepted in Atlantic City in a way that they would never be accepted on the Main Line (the wealthy, largely Protestant, old-line suburbs of Philadelphia)."⁸

The city's bright, twinkling skyline served as a backdrop to the illusion of wealth and extravagance. The Dennis Hotel, for instance, was an imitation of a

French chateau, while the Marlborough-Blenheim Hotel looked like a Moorish castle. Exuding a similar over-the-top opulence, the 4,000-seat Warner Theatre served as another example of the city's architecture of fantasy. With its classical facade, expansive lobby, crystal chandeliers, and showy smoking rooms, the theater gave its white customers—African Americans had to sit in the "Crow's Nest"—the chance to feel like they were kings and queens, like people deserving of the spectacular comforts of the rich.⁹ The service inside the city's hotels, movie palaces, and restaurants matched the excesses of the building themselves. Bellmen in bright red uniforms, crisply dressed ushers, and waiters wearing white gloves and tuxedos lavished their patrons with unrestrained attention and service. An accountant from Pittsburgh came to Atlantic City, one observer remarks, to be treated like "royalty." If he had gone to Newport, he would have been a "nobody," but in Atlantic City, the local newspaper noted on the social page that a "prominent and distinguished gentleman" from Pittsburgh was staying at this or that hotel. This man and others like him came back to this town that made them feel like somebody.¹⁰

Along with the illusion of opulence, Atlantic City projected an image of exclusiveness that middle-class white visitors typically associated with the rich. Segregation, not surprisingly, prevailed throughout the city. African Americans could not sit where they wanted at the movies or on the beach. Local police steered black men and women away from the Boardwalk and toward the city's own version of Harlem's 125th Street, Arctic Avenue. Dress codes kept the poor and those some might deem tasteless at a distance. A local ordinance passed in 1920 regulated public appearances, requiring bathers to cover themselves from their shoulders to their knees when they left the beach. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, uniformed police warned women about walking down the street in only their swimsuits.¹¹ At night on the Boardwalk and in the hotels and restaurants, men wore coats, ties, and freshly polished loafers, and women dressed in hats, stockings, and, if they could afford to, cashmere sweaters with mink collars.¹²

Atlantic City leisure merchants created fantasies beyond the overlapping illusions of wealth, extravagance, and exclusivity. While the children of Warsaw and Gdansk came to the Boardwalk to try on a rich man's coat, others—sometimes the same people—headed to town to experiment with different and new sexual identities. Location helped to make Atlantic City a place of relaxed sexual constraints. Woodrow Wilson worried about how people behaved at the beach. "One of the great dangers of Atlantic City," he complained in 1912, "is that so many men come here. They know that they are a great distance from their homes and believe that there are no home folks to watch them. They are too apt to adjourn their morals and have a fling."¹³ Far from family and friends, many visitors, as the future president recognized, felt free in Atlantic City than they did in their everyday lives. Despite the city's emphasis on public decorum, it remained a beach town, a place where for much of the day people wore less clothes than at home. This constant display of bodies gave the whole

town an erotic charge. The city's jazzy, bawdy, and slightly raunchy entertainment culture gave it another jolt of sexual energy.¹⁴

Throughout the twentieth century, sex made up a key commodity of the city's leisure industry. Teenagers prowled the spaces above and below the Boardwalk, while honeymooners came to town to begin their marriages. Prostitutes worked along city streets and in hotel lobbies and club bars. Conventioners made up the bulk of their customers. Beginning in 1929, when Convention Hall, a building large enough to fly an airplane in, opened on the Boardwalk ten blocks south of New York Avenue, Atlantic City hosted some of the nation's largest business and professional meetings. Each year, thousands of doctors, teachers, and plumbers flocked to the city. Some slipped away from their hotels and rooming houses, looking for sex in red districts near Chalfonte Alley, Pacific Avenue, and what would later become the heart of gay Atlantic City, New York Avenue.¹⁵

From its earliest days, Atlantic City's climate of relative sexual freedom attracted gay white tourists to town. Away from family, spouses, and the hometown police, some men took advantage of their relative anonymity to look for other men. Before 1930, however, the city did not seem to have had any clearly marked gay bars or cruising zones. Men searching for other men appear to have identified themselves to each other on the beach and the Boardwalk through their clothing.¹⁶ As early as 1896, just a couple of decades after the construction of the resort's first hotel, a journalist spotted what he described as "addled-pated youth whose supply of brain matter is exceedingly limited" wearing brightly colored silk garters with their black bathing suits. In 1925, a *New York Times* reporter found "cunning-looking men wearing trick pants, pale purple hose, tan shoes with two-inch soles and lavender neckties" on the Boardwalk.¹⁷

Around the time that the *Times*'s reporter spotted men in high heels, Louisa Mack opened what many in town consider to be the city's first gay-tolerant bar. Like many of the nation's first urban gay bars, Mack set up her business on a hard-to-find street, away from prime residential areas and business centers.¹⁸ Located just off the beach behind New York Avenue on Westminster Avenue—nicknamed "Snake Alley" because of the way this tight, narrow, one-block long street slithered from right to left to right—the bar stood amid a jumble of inexpensive rooming houses and private homes. Around the corner from Louisa's, along New York Avenue and near Pacific Avenue, there were small shops that operated as gambling parlors and dark, smoky bars, some apparently owned by mobsters and their friends. Prostitutes worked the street corners.¹⁹ Although South New York Avenue ran right up to Boardwalk and was within a few blocks of the Warner Theater and the Dennis Hotel, the block's cultural distance from the resort's mainstream meant that the area lacked some of the social policing of other parts of the city. This, in turn, provided a cover—a thin cover to be sure—for gay men.

Understanding the sexual politics of the day, Louisa Mack provided her customers with another thin cover by making her club as invisible as possible. She did not advertise or put up a sign—only a bare light bulb hung over the door to let customers know they were in the right place. “It didn’t look like a bar. It looked like a house, painted yellow with green trim,” one man recalls of the Entertainer’s Club. “If you didn’t know it was there, you’d never see it.” Enough men, however, found the bar to keep it in business for more than fifty years.²⁰

“Oh, Miss Mack,” one regular visitor to Atlantic City remembers, “she loved the gay boys.” As they walked into her club, she smiled, joked, and slapped them on the backside.²¹ Decorated with bright orchids woven into her hair and running down over her chest to the floor, Mack, who one Snake Alley resident said looked a lot like Sophie Tucker, stood by the door like a dutiful sentry. She looked over each customer trying to spot malicious pretenders and undercover police officers. She also wanted to make sure that her club exuded a certain sense of style, even “class.” The Entertainer’s Club, like other places in the city, enforced a strict nighttime dress code. For men, jackets were required after six o’clock to get past Miss Mack at the door. One man laughs, recalling, “You had to wear suits. I remember standing outside, sweltering in the summer, waiting to get in.”²² After the club closed and before the sun rose the next day, Mack made sure her assistants scrubbed the sidewalks and cleaned the gutters. Neighbors tolerated the Entertainer’s Club, one local remembers, because it was “clean and never smelled.”²³

Mack patrolled the inside of her club as aggressively as she did the door. Hoping to keep the police at bay and add another layer of anonymity to the place, she tried to keep her customers’ bodies from touching. She forbade dancing and kissing in the club. These sanctions, she must have thought, would provide her with plausible deniability. If asked, she could say she ran a fancy nightclub and didn’t care who came, so long as they dressed up and behaved.²⁴

While the opening of Louisa’s marked a key moment in the creation of gay Atlantic City, it did not alone, as one local drag queen argued in the 1980s, move “the [gay] scene toward the beach.”²⁵ Before World War II, gay life in Atlantic City remained dispersed. Fearful of arrest and exposure, some probably stayed away from Louisa’s and New York Avenue, meeting instead in private or at out-of-the-way house parties.²⁶ Others still met on the Boardwalk and the beach. Beginning in the 1930s, flashy drag shows or “pansy acts” staged at the Pansy Club and the Cotton Club, located in different corners of the city away from New York Avenue, provided another public place for men interested in homosexual encounters to meet and talk. But the shows also caused alarm. Worried that the “spread” of these drag shows would generate “adverse advertising,” the city’s mayor banned the acts in 1933.²⁷ Despite the mayor’s actions, bars and nightspots such as Louisa’s and the Cotton Club would become, as they did elsewhere, the central institutions in gay public life in

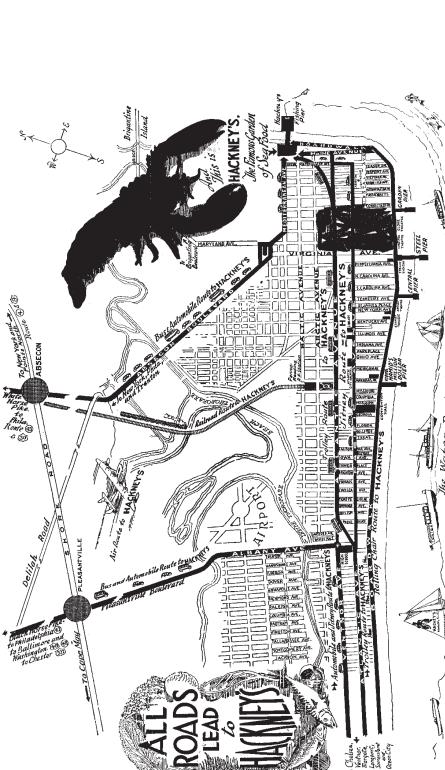


Figure 1: “Hackney’s Map”
SOURCE: Allen “Boo” Pergament Collection (Private Library), Margate, New Jersey.

Atlantic City, offering men, in the words of two leading historians of sexuality, "a haven where gay men . . . could meet, form friendships, and initiate sexual relationships."²⁸

World War II marked an important but, unlike other places in America, not the most important turning point in the history of Atlantic City's gay scene. As the United States prepared for war, local leaders made a calculated gamble about the city's future. Judging that mobilization would cut into tourism, city officials turned the town over to the U.S. military. This gave Atlantic City business owners the chance to keep making money during the war while also generating favorable publicity about the resort's patriotic spirit. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the military transformed the city's beaches into a D-day training ground, the massive convention hall into an indoor drill field, and the Jazz Age hotels into dorms, hospitals, and recovery centers. Soldiers from California to Maine, from gritty blue-collar towns and grassy streetcar suburbs, swarmed over the city between 1942 and 1945, packing the Boardwalk, the movie palaces, the restaurants, and the clubs.²⁹

Some soldiers found their way over to the bars of New York and Westminster Avenues. In Atlantic City, like elsewhere, mobilization, as Allan Bérubé has remarked, released some of the pressures that trapped so many "gay people in silence, isolation, and self-contempt." Freed from parental and community surveillance, young men and women, many for the first time, had room to explore their sexuality and erotic desires.³⁰ Quickly learning the terrain of local urban sexual geographies, women and men interested in same-sex relationships wandered over to "combat zones" and "red light districts." In Atlantic City, men who wanted to meet other men headed over to the Entertainer's Club and New York Avenue bars featuring burlesque shows and female impersonators. At the same time, they helped turn the relatively unregulated social spaces around the street into a "cruising" zone where people could meet for sex and companionship. Nearby guesthouses simultaneously began to cater to gay customers. The development of these homosocial spaces was done by word of mouth; gay-friendly and gay-tolerant spots did not advertise for fear of police or extra-legal retribution.³¹

In the years following World War II, as the soldiers left town and white tourists returned to the Boardwalk, gay life in Atlantic City became more developed and more visible. Postwar prosperity contributed to the growth of New York Avenue. Like most Americans, men interested in finding other men for homosexual encounters saw their incomes rise in the 1940s and 1950s. Again, like other Americans, they spent some of their money on vacations and new cars. Cars, in particular, gave gay men increased mobility and freedom; they could get away from home easier and faster than ever before. Many from Baltimore to New York City, it seems, pointed their turbo-powered Pontiacs toward New York Avenue.³²

While New York Avenue remained throughout the 1950s on the city's social fringe, it was fast becoming a well-known focal point in an emerging Mid-

Atlantic gay resort scene. By then, the area around the street had maybe two or three gay bars and a few more gay rooming houses. Yet the geography of gay tourism in Atlantic City in the immediate postwar era continued to be somewhat decentralized, at least compared to later years. On summer weekends, gay men congregated on the beach in front of the Claridge Hotel. (They gathered there, several explain with a smile, because of the hotel's phallic shaped peak.) At night, some men hung out at the bars along New York Avenue, while others mingled with straight couples at the Madrid Club, Jockey Club, McCrory's Cafe, and the cocktail bar at the Brighton Hotel.³³

Sometime after the war, another bar, Snug Harbor, opened ten miles out of town and away from the local police. Getting there required a car and detailed directions. You had to drive east from the ocean into the piney woods until you came to a dirt road. At the end of this unmarked path was a barn. Quiet during the week and the winter, on summer weekends in the 1940s and 1950s, the barn turned into a boisterous bar and dance club for gay men visiting Atlantic City and New York Avenue.³⁴

Despite, or maybe because of, the growing visibility of New York Avenue and other gay spots in the area, gay tourists and residents did not escape the postwar backlash against homosexuality. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, gay men across America were harassed and denied the right of free association. As the fear of communism swelled and the ideology of domestic containment spread over the nation, narrowing definitions of acceptable behavior, gay men and women found themselves tagged sexual psychopaths, degenerates, deviates, and even communists. National magazines warned that "Homosexuals Are Dangerous" and "Lesbians Prey on the Weak." Joining the assault on homosexuals, Atlantic City business leaders, politicians, and police targeted gay men and gay-tolerant bars for attack.³⁵

In 1951, several New York Avenue-area hotel owners protested the renewal of the liquor licenses of several bars—possibly gay-tolerant bars—on the southern end of the street.³⁶ Over the next decade or so, local authorities regularly shut down gay clubs. At the same time, dozens of city taverns and grocery stores doubled as illegal gambling parlors. Some scribbled the daily number onto wood crates on the side of their buildings so drivers could find out if they "hit" the jackpot without getting out of their cars. Typically, these places remained open for business, especially if they lined the pockets of the right policemen and politicians. Yet after complaints from religious leaders, a New York Avenue gay bar was closed for 25 days in 1953.³⁷ Three years later, the Social Action Committee of the Ministerial Association of Greater Atlantic City warned that "the homosexual situation [in the city] was 'acute.'" Committee members complained about what they viewed as "a great reluctance to enforce the law" on vice. "Some arrests," they protested, "have been made in this area . . . to try to satisfy the clergy and to fool the public, but no fear has been put into the hearts of the law breakers."³⁸

On the streets of Atlantic City in the 1950s and 1960s, individual gay men faced sporadic harassment. Because they never knew when a police officer would strike, most exercised caution in public. "You could not be too flamboyant," a longtime resident recalls.³⁹ Local business leader John Schlutz remembers that the police regularly arrested cross-dressers and drag queens. Two things particularly irked one powerful local judge, Stephen A. D'Amico. He didn't like to hear the word *motherfucker*, and he didn't like to see men in dresses. Whenever cases involving either of these offenses came before him, he threw the book at the accused. Police officers, meanwhile, pestered patrons at gay bars. There was one sergeant who, according to Schultz, "hated faggots." "He would come by Louisa's," Schultz remembers, "and try to intimidate people. Louisa would always ask him if he was looking for one of his sons."⁴⁰

By the 1950s, the state Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) joined the fight against gay bars. With the end of Prohibition, some New Jersey officials worried about regulating behavior in bars and other places that served alcohol. In response, the General Assembly passed a law empowering the ABC to close down any licensed bars that served "any known criminals, gangsters, . . . prostitutes, female impersonators, or other persons of ill repute." Beginning in the early 1950s, liquor investigators began to target gay bars, insisting that "the mere presence of female impersonators in and upon licensed premises presents a definite social problem" and that the "mere thought of such perverts is repugnant to . . . a normal red-blooded man." When the owners of an Asbury Park bar challenged the ABC's contention that homosexuals could be identified simply by observing them, which in turn became the basis for closing bars, a superior court judge upheld the legality of the raids, writing, "It is in the plumage that you recognize the bird."⁴¹

Not long after launching its statewide campaign against gay bars, the ABC focused on Louisa Mack's club. Arguing "that . . . exposure to homosexuals might be harmful to 'some members of the public'" and that "the congregating of homosexuals must be prohibited as a 'threat to the safety and morals of the public,'" the head of the liquor control agency authorized the suspension of Mack's license. One year later, the city closed her bar for 190 days for unspecified reasons. No other bar was shut down for this long during this period, and this was an era when many Atlantic City taverns continued to make as much money running numbers as pouring glasses of beer. In the early 1960s, undercover ABC agents returned to the Entertainer's Club. Once again, they found the bar filled with "undesirables" and ordered it closed, this time for 240 days.⁴²

A few years later, the ABC cracked down against Val's, another New York Avenue gay bar. By this time, there were four gay bars in the immediate New York Avenue area, a few others within a couple blocks of the street, and another on South Mississippi Avenue next to the Convention Hall.⁴³ Located in a converted auto repair shop near the corner of New York and Pacific Avenues, Val's, which opened ten years earlier, looked like any other "shot and a beer"

joint. It rarely closed and always seemed dark and smoky. The plain, narrow bar was U-shaped with cheap wood stools on all three sides. In the back, there were a few tables that were often pushed to the side to make space for a dance floor. Along the side stood a shuffleboard machine that sometimes doubled as a stage. Val's rather ordinary appearance, however, masked its importance to gay Atlantic City.

While Val's lacked the formality of the Entertainer's Club, it also lacked its 1930s-era staging. Louisa Mack always insisted that her club was a "classy" place. She pointed to the dress code as evidence of its upscale status, but the requirement to wear a jacket was, in part, a by-product of the theatrics of the closet and a way for her to say that her bar posed no threat to prevailing values. Although owned and operated in later years by a straight couple, Val's functioned as a more open, more explicitly gay, and more overtly "out" place. Perhaps most important, it was, locals said, the first public place in the city where men could dance with each other and touch without being asked to leave.⁴⁴

In 1966, the ABC began its campaign against Val's. After a series of undercover visits, liquor authority officials concluded that the bar served "apparent homosexuals." When lawyers for Val's and two other New Jersey taverns shut down by the ABC later asked investigators how they determined the sexual orientation of bar patrons, the agents answered with steady confidence. Although one said the men at Val's and the other clubs were "normally dressed" and showed "very good behavior, . . . they were," he noted, "conversing . . . in a lisping tone of voice, and . . . they used limp-wrist movements to each other." "One man," another agent testified, "would stick his tongue out at another and they would laugh and they would giggle." Yet state officials were most alarmed by Val's tolerance of men dancing with other men. Because it allowed men to swing, shake, and shuffle, the ABC issued three citations against the bar in 1966 and finally ordered it closed in 1967.

Val's owners and its bartenders decided to fight back against the ABC. As if taunting the liquor authority, Val's management took out newspaper advertisements in 1967, announcing its intention to stay open "all summer long despite rumors to the contrary." In an even bolder move, Val's took the ABC to court. Two other taverns cited for serving homosexuals, one in Newark and the other in Trenton, joined Val's in challenging the liquor board's power to close down bars for no other reason than the presumed presence of gay men and women on licensed premises. The Philadelphia-based Homosexual Law Reform Society (HLRS), an important early gay rights organization, immediately understood the significance of the case and lent its financial, tactical, and legal support to the fight. If Val's won, HLRS activists believed, gay women and men in New Jersey would finally gain the right to freely assemble.⁴⁵

Throughout the spring of 1967, the case formerly known as *One Eleven Wines & Liquors, Inc. v. Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control* wound its way through the New Jersey courts, eventually ending up before the State Supreme Court. Surprising many, the justices unanimously ruled that "well-

behaved homosexuals' cannot be forbidden to patronize taverns." Reversing a lower court order, they maintained that the ABC "was not justified in suspending or revoking licenses because apparent homosexuals were permitted to congregate at bars." One member of the bench, while agreeing with the decision, cautioned that "although well-behaved homosexuals cannot be forbidden to patronize taverns, they may not engage in any conduct which would be offensive in public decency . . . (men kissing each other on the lips, etc.)."⁴⁶

In the wake of its courtroom triumph, Val's became a regional symbol of gay resistance to government attacks. Men from all over the East Coast made the pilgrimage to Atlantic City to pay tribute to the bar's stand against state harassment, something most had probably experienced at one point in their lives. It hardly mattered when Val's started to charge a cover fee; the lines outside the bar just grew longer. The money, the owners said, went to defray legal costs, and many apparently contributed more than the minimum. The crowds at Val's reflected the growing willingness of gay men in the late 1960s to make themselves visible—to go, in this case, to a bar that newspapers broadcast served homosexuals. In many ways, the response to Val's victory served as a less dramatic, but still important and revealing, precursor to the fierce resolve to resist harassment that exploded at the Stonewall bar in New York City two and a half years later.⁴⁷

Val's successful challenge of the ABC also marked a key shift in the sexual geography of Atlantic City. After 1967, the whole block, one man observes, "turned." By turned, he meant that it turned gay. Jealously watching the lines in front of Val's grow longer each night, other South New York Avenue bars decided to get in on the action. The owner of the Fort Pitts, a struggling rock-and-roll club catering to local college students, approached a popular Val's bartender (let's call him Mike Mann) in 1968 and asked him to remake his straight bar into a gay bar. Mann hired other gay men to serve drinks along with a team of male go-go dancers. Within weeks, the Fort Pitts was crowded every night. A few months later, the owner of the bar across the street from the Fort Pitts asked Mann to come work for him and turn his place into gay bar. Again it worked, and a kind of domino effect rolled over South New York Avenue. Within a couple of years, the Saratoga, a one-time country and western joint, and the Rendezvous, a former jazz club, re-created themselves as gay bars. At the same time, several more Snake Alley rooming houses turned themselves into inexpensive "gay-friendly" hotels.⁴⁸

A wave of antigay backlash up and down the East Coast added to New York Avenue's growing popularity. Located forty miles south of Atlantic City at the very bottom of New Jersey, Cape May, with its gingerbread-trimmed houses and proximity to a Coast Guard base, had a reputation in the postwar years as a quiet gay resort. Toward the end of the 1965 summer season, local merchants and city council members held a closed meeting to "discuss and discourage the establishment of Cape May as a southern New Jersey Fire Island." To keep gay men out, they passed an ordinance making it illegal for men to wear short

bathing suits on the city's beaches. Just to make sure that the rule would be enforced, they voted to provide policemen with rulers and tape measures. That same summer, city officials in nearby Rehobeth Beach, Delaware, tried to discourage homosexuals from "congregat[ing] like bees in a swarm in . . . the area." Several years later, just as the New Jersey Supreme Court affirmed the right of homosexuals to freely congregate, the New York State Liquor Commission launched a crackdown on New York City gay bars. As Empire State liquor agents harassed patrons of Gotham gay bars and suspended and revoked the licenses of these establishments, some men and women decided to play things safe and take the three-hour trip to Atlantic City, where, according to a newspaper account, they found a more "permissive atmosphere."⁴⁹

By the time of the Stonewall Rebellion in 1969—a protest triggered by the repressive tactics of the ABC board in New York City—there were eight gay clubs and a number of gay-friendly shops and restaurants on South New York Avenue and a couple adjoining streets. Looking back, Val's Supreme Court victory seems to have propelled the growth and centralization of gay space in Atlantic City. Yet the development of New York Avenue was not solely the result of Val's legal triumph. Other economic and social changes happening outside of the gay community were at work here as well. White flight, disinvestment, desegregation, and an accompanying shift in the perception of urban spaces proved to be just as important, if not as obvious, factors in the growth of gay tourism in Atlantic City.

Like most urban places across the United States, the "Queen of Resorts" faced hard times in the 1960s. Throughout the decade, Atlantic City suffered through the throes of deindustrialization. With each passing year, the city's economic base—tourism—eroded. There are many reasons why the well-dressed, middle-class white women and men who came to the city every summer in the 1950s abandoned the resort in the 1960s. Many preferred the privacy of their newly air-conditioned living rooms in the suburbs to Boardwalk crowds. Others cooled themselves in backyard pools and neighborhood swim clubs. Still others took advantage of cheap airfares and package deals and headed off to more exotic places such as the Caribbean and California. More than anything else, however, white tourists were scared off by the desegregation of Atlantic City's public spaces.⁵⁰

In one of the crueler ironies of the past century, white northerners recoiled from integration at the very moment that black southerners won back their civil rights. Italians in Carnegie, Brooklyn, for example, attacked African Americans who dared to buy homes in "their" neighborhood. Halfway across the country in Detroit, white residents used restrictive covenants and discrimination by realtors and mortgage lenders to keep blacks out. Atlantic City's postwar fate was similarly shaped by this broad-based northern campaign of massive resistance.⁵¹

Until the 1960s, Atlantic City was, in the words of a longtime resident born in Georgia, "a Jim Crow town to be sure." Segregation ruled the city's public

spaces, drawing a color line that kept blacks and whites apart in housing, at the movies, and on the beach and the Boardwalk. By the end of the decade, civil rights activists had eliminated some of the most egregious forms of segregation in the city. Yet integration was a long way off.⁵² However, once African Americans started to hang out on the Boardwalk, gather in hotel lounges, and sit where they wanted at the movies, straight white families—the staple of the city's tourist industry—started to view the city differently. Many no longer saw it as the "World's Playground," as a fantasy world of ornate splendor and carefully enforced exclusivity. Instead, they regarded Atlantic City as an all-too-real and frightening "ghetto" world of crime and chaos, as a place to be avoided at all costs. As perceptions of the city changed with the desegregation of its public spaces, longtime white residents fled to virtually all-white offshore communities and faithful tourists went elsewhere or remained ensconced in their private worlds of the suburbs. This double dose of white flight and abandonment threw Atlantic City into a tailspin.

By the close of the 1960s, Atlantic City had lost its luster. The nightly parade up and down the Boardwalk got smaller with each year. The jazz messengers stayed in New York and the crooners headed to Las Vegas. The Ferris wheels barely budged, and when they did, they creaked from neglect. Palm readers and pizza parlors replaced upscale linen shops and jewelry stores on the Boardwalk. As tourism dropped off, the city went through its own version of deindustrialization. Its population fell from 66,000 in 1940 to 48,000 in 1970. Those left behind were typically black, and according to the census, most were getting poorer with each passing year. By the middle of the 1960s, a third of city residents lived below the poverty line. Health conditions were appalling. The city ranked first in the state in tuberculosis, diabetes, and pneumonia deaths. Housing conditions in the resort were among the worst in the nation. More than half of all rental units in the city contained structural problems. As usual, black residents of the Northside faced the harshest conditions. According to a 1965 housing survey, a quarter of all whites lived in structurally flawed buildings, while more than 60 percent of African Americans occupied deficient housing.⁵³

By 1970, Atlantic City's unmaking was just about complete. Over the next few years, the city's population continued to fall. Whole sections of town were torn down in a reckless urban renewal campaign that left a huge chunk of prime beachfront property an undeveloped wasteland and mocking reminder of the city's falling fortunes. By 1974, the city did not have a single major supermarket, and its only remaining year-round movie theaters showed XXX-rated films twenty-four hours a day. Journalists regularly compared the city's once-vibrant ethnic neighborhoods to bombed-out Dresden, war-torn Beirut, or the blighted South Bronx. Those who stayed behind locked themselves behind steel doors and barred windows. Drug dealers seemed to rule abandoned street corners. Political corruption—since 1970, four of the city's last six mayors have been indicted—only exasperated Atlantic City's woes as some elected

officials turned their backs on their constituents, all the while lining their pockets and those of their cronies. Things were so bad in the early 1970s that locals grimly joked, "Will the last person out of town please turn off the lights?"

"Nobody wanted anything to do with the city," a Philadelphia gay man says about Atlantic City in the 1970s. "So," he adds, "no one cared if gay men moved into town. . . . Gay people were not welcome in other places, but there was nothing in Atlantic City, so they tolerated the gay community because they had nothing." Emptiness, he believes, created the social space for "outness." Another gay man adds that when "respectable Philadelphians," meaning of course white Philadelphians, "headed to the family beaches around it, Atlantic City was left to us." New York Avenue, argues another frequent visitor, flourished because its gay patrons "didn't offend anyone—there was no one to offend." As yet another man put it, no one was watching them. Atlantic City's urban decline, he maintains, meant there were fewer hostile heterosexuals around to intimidate gay men and make them feel threatened, unwanted, and self-conscious. It was easier, these men believe, to create open and vibrant gay leisure spaces when no one else was there. Yet these white men's sense of emptiness is revealing. Atlantic City was not literally empty in the early 1970s. Tens of thousands of people lived on the streets Monopoly made famous. But increasingly, most of these people were poor, and many were African American and Puerto Rican. White gay men, the people who came to Atlantic City, somehow erased these other people from their memories and from the city's urban landscape.⁵⁴ Perhaps even more important, mainstream investors, bankers, and real estate agents also looked at the city through racially skewed lenses. Apparently to them, the presence of so many poor people and so many people of color meant that the city's homes and businesses had no value. And to them, a city with no value was an empty city.

Yet a smaller group of less well-established and well-connected investors—both gay and straight—seized on the opportunities of emptiness. Taking advantage of sinking property values, businesspeople bought up the buildings on New York Avenue and turned even more of them into gay clubs, restaurants, shops, and rooming houses. Emptiness also put a brake on police harassment. Local officials, it seems, did not want to scare off the city's only expanding tourist sector. One other factor might have helped to seal New York Avenue off from the police and other forms of harassment. Rumor had it that several clubs along the street remained in mob hands in the 1970s.⁵⁵

By the mid-1970s, New York Avenue had mushroomed into a full-blown scene. City watchers estimated that two, sometimes three, even four thousand mostly, although not exclusively, white gay men and a few women roamed the streets on summer Saturday nights in the 1970s. From Memorial Day to the night of the Miss America Pageant, a week after Labor Day, gay men flooded into town on Thursday nights and stayed until Sunday, sleeping at one of the rooming houses—nicknamed "fraternities"—on New York Avenue or Snake Alley. New York Avenue's growth depended, in particular, on reasonably priced,

even cheap, accommodations. As the city's straight tourism sector sagged in the 1960s and 1970s, room rates dropped. Inexpensive rooms, in turn, opened up the city to a broad spectrum of middle- and working-class gay tourists. Those who didn't stay the weekend drove down from Philadelphia for the day. "You could nap," one Philadelphia man remembers, "wake up, party, nap, wake up, party until you were ready to go home." "It was not unusual," he adds, "to close the bars in Philadelphia at 2 AM, drive to the shore on one of the small roads, and get there in time to throw beer cans at the sun."⁵⁶

After the long night, revelers crashed on the beach. On those busy summer days in the 1970s, people dragged themselves out of bed early to the gay beach located in front of the Claridge Hotel. That was the only way to get enough space for a towel. By noon, every inch of sand was taken up with sunbathers and gear. The beach buzzed with activity. Men wore string bikinis, dresses, gowns, and headpieces. Sometimes couples and friends dined on the beach on tables decorated with linen, crystal, silver, and bouquets of flowers. At twilight, everyone headed back to New York Avenue where the party started all over again.⁵⁷

By the mid-1970s, New York Avenue and the adjoining streets began to show the signs of a mature business district. The throngs of people led to more investment and eventually to a growing specialization within the market. Although the area never grew into a full-blown residential area, such as San Francisco's Castro district, some gay women and men did spend their summers in the apartments above the bars and restaurants lining the street. Still the city's year-round gay community remained somewhat dispersed, even as the tourist scene became more concentrated and diverse. Each club and restaurant along New York Avenue catered to a specific segment of the gay leisure market. The Entertainer's Club remained a discreet, rather subdued, spot for well-dressed, often older, men. Owned by Billy Mott from Birmingham, Alabama, Mama Mott's called itself the "gayest place in town" and served heaping plates of pasta on red-and-white checked tablecloths under black velvet paintings of men in erotic poses. Franks's X-tra Dry Café, located just across Pacific Avenue, featured quarter-pound sandwiches and twenty-five-cent beers twenty-four hours a day. The after-the-beach crowd congregated at the Lark, a couple of doors down from the Boardwalk. Lyle's was the place for "breakfast and gossip," the Front Porch for lunch, and the Puka Lani Lounge for cocktails. Above the Lark stood the Ramrod, a male-only, leather-only, country and western bar with a pool table in the back. The Chester, Rendezvous, and Chez Paree featured big dance floors and DJs playing disco music at full-bass-thumping volume until the sun came up. Across from the Chez, Dee's Truck Shop served breakfast, subs, and snacks "By Gay People—For Gay People." The Grand Central Resort, a self-proclaimed getaway with "something for everyone," opened toward the end of the 1970s and had a piano bar on one floor and a disco on another. Lesbians and older men, although not the same crowd that hung out at Lousia's, went to the Brass Rail, "Home of the Big Mug." Late

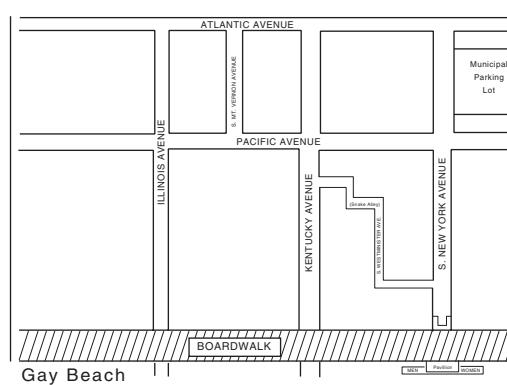


Figure 2. Atlantic City, Gay Scene
SOURCE: "For Our Visiting Friends," *Seagull*, August 11, 1978, Vertical Files, File: Gay and Lesbian Community, Heston Room, Atlantic City Free Public Library.

at night, the Saratoga and Dirty Edna's (the old Fort Pitts) presented drag shows. Dee Lewis would sing, "It Should Have Been Me," or Diane Jones would whisper, "I Can't Stand the Rain," or Tinsel Garland would cover the Nancy Sinatra hit, "These Boots Are Made for Walking." On Sunday mornings, gay men gathered at the Grand Central Resort to worship at the Metropolitan Community Church.⁵⁸

Sex was another part of the appeal of New York Avenue. The street took off at the moment when growing numbers of gay men believed, as one man put it, "Sex was liberating and more sex was more liberating."⁵⁹ New York journalists Jack and Lige urged gay men to come to Atlantic City. "If you're tired of piss elegant showy resorts where guys are more concerned with what they're wearing than with the many joys of sodomy," they wrote in the magazine *SCREW*, "pack your duds and try a weekend in Atlantic City."⁶⁰ Sex was, according to a Philadelphia man, "free and open" in Atlantic City in the 1970s. Yet it wasn't always free. While the city lacked the gay bathhouses of New York City and San Francisco, it still had plenty of semi-public places for semi-public sex. On most days, young men and teenagers congregated near the Boardwalk pavilion at the end of the street or leaned against a railing outside of the Lark and the Chez Paree. Throughout the night, they walked off with other men down the Boardwalk or went around the corner in a car. Usually they came back with

twenty dollars and a pint of gin or vodka.⁶¹ Someone looking for "a trick" might wander down a dark hall near the pool table at the back of the Ramrod bar. An open door at a Snake Alley guesthouse or hotel was often an invitation for sex. "I believe the DeVille had a dark hallway for a while where sex occurred," one man recalls. "I remember specifically," he adds, "seeing a man with a partially open door and going into his room and having sex." Another Atlantic City visitor jokes, "You could leave the bar and turn two tricks on your way home at four in the morning." Hearing this story, one man cracks, "Only two?"⁶²

Drugs were another part of the New York Avenue scene. Locals called the same Boardwalk pavilion where male prostitutes congregated, "Acid Hill." Some nights, the "Quaalude Queen" stumbled down New York Avenue passing out the powerful barbiturates. "Ups," "black beauties," "brown and clears," and other kinds of amphetamines were as easy to find on the street as a beer or a gin and tonic. "Sex, Drugs, and Disco" was how one man remembers New York Avenue.⁶³

"New York Avenue," wrote a couple of Philadelphia reporters in 1970, "was the gayest street in town . . . [and] probably the liveliest." Twenty-four hours a day, they noted, guys in "tight shirts and deep-cut hip-huggers" moved from "one gay joint to another." "By the early-1970s," a drag queen named Seersucker Suit observed, New York Avenue "reached its peak." "It was alive," she added. "We had parties every night." To her, New York Avenue was like Christopher Street in New York City. "It had an identity, it had vitality, was the only place in the entire city that was alive." Resse Palley, the man known in Atlantic City as "The Merchant to the Rich," agrees with Seersucker Suit. "New York Avenue," he now says, was "alive. . . . It was the only excitement that was around."⁶⁴

Before the mid-1970s, straight men and women kept their distance from New York Avenue's packed bars and crowded restaurants. Occasionally, Boardwalk strollers stopped to gawk at the "fantastic exuberance" of the street's wild, club hopping, party-all-night scene. After a few jokes about "fairies" and "faggots" punctuated by a few exaggerated hand gestures, they walked on, continuing their journeys through dusty Boardwalk souvenir shops, broken-down arcades, and tired looking salt-water taffy stores. In the mid-1970s, however, straight women and men started to trickle over to the street to dance, eat a bowl of pasta at Mama Mott's, buy drugs, or get a closer look at the lavish flamboyance of the place. Bartender Mike Mann remembers that around this time, his straight friends started to pester him to take them to the Chester or the Rendezvous. About the same time, Herb Tapper recalls sitting out on the front step of a New York Avenue guesthouse and looking up at the Front Porch restaurant. Seeing the eatery packed with neatly dressed straight couples from the downbeach suburbs of Margate and Ventnor, he remembers thinking, "This is the end." New York Avenue, he now believes, was a victim of its own success. Once there were straight eyes on the street,

looking, staring at the men in tight shirts and hip huggers, New York Avenue, Tapper maintains, lost some of its invisibility and, with it, some of its vitality, recklessness, and "outness."⁶⁵

While New York Avenue pulsed with life and a few straights started to explore the scene there, gay tourism, nonetheless, remained as invisible to the city's financial movers and shakers as it did to the author John McPhee. Apparently, municipal leaders never considered supporting the further growth and development of the gay business sector. Instead, the Chamber of Commerce, Hotel and Motel Association, and Visitor's Bureau continued to search for other ways to revive the resort, which meant, for them, making it once again a mecca for straight white, middle-class families looking for a weekend of fantasy and fun. Throughout the 1960s, Atlantic City boosters launched frantic, sometimes almost silly, promotional campaigns to bring middle-class families back to the beach and the Boardwalk. They sent "Happy Atlantic City" buses to Reading, Pennsylvania; advertised on Times Square; and traveled to Canada to tout the wonders of the Jersey shore. Promising to bring the "right" kind of people to town, one group petitioned to turn the urban renewal site near the beach into a recreational vehicle park. Seeking an off-season revenue stream, another group of investors came up with the idea of transforming the city dump into a ski hill with fake snow and a short lift. Others recommended covering the Boardwalk and converting it into a mall. Local Latinos suggested creating a tourist barrio near the beach.⁶⁶

Despite all the plans, no major bank or developer, it seemed, wanted to invest in Atlantic City.⁶⁷ Undeterred local bankers and business leaders continued in the 1970s to look for ways to boost the city's struggling economy. Few, however, ever thought about building up the New York Avenue gay tourist sector. None, it seems, considered enhancing the city's growing Puerto Rican or black neighborhoods through in-fill housing projects or community bank programs. Instead, like their counterparts in other deindustrialized cities, they looked for ways to bring middle-class families back to town, not to live but to visit. For city officials in Cleveland and Baltimore, this meant building neo-traditional baseball stadiums. In Camden, New Jersey, and Bridgeport, Connecticut, two horribly blighted cities, this meant aquariums, and in San Antonio, Texas, and Augusta, Georgia, this meant the construction of river-walks with the same restaurants and shops found in the malls. Atlantic City leaders thought about all of these ideas, but they could not take their eyes off of the bright lights of Las Vegas.

Beginning in 1974, casino industry representatives and South Jersey supporters in the hotel and restaurant industry blitzed the state with television and radio advertisements telling New Jersey citizens that slot machines and gaming tables could make Atlantic City once again the "World's Playground." It took two hard-fought statewide campaigns, but finally, on a cold and overcast November day in 1976, a majority of New Jersey voters approved a measure allowing for casino gambling in Atlantic City. Everywhere from the Board-

walk to the bay, residents danced in the streets. "A new day is coming," they believed. Atlantic City tingled with expectations. Investors rushed back to town and gobbled every available patch of land. Boardwalk landlords painted their storefronts, and restaurant owners spruced up their dining rooms. Everyone, it seemed, expected to get rich and to do it overnight.⁶⁸

Like everywhere else in the city, they danced on New York Avenue on the night the gambling referendum passed in 1976. Soon, the business leaders there caught the casino gold rush fever. Many seemed to believe that money would pour off the Boardwalk onto the street. Like their counterparts across the city, New York Avenue business leaders waited for the windfall to come their way. "When gambling was passed," John Schlutz boasted in 1978, "everybody told me, 'It's gonna kill gay life in Atlantic City—gays don't gamble,' but I got news for you. . . . They do gamble and they love the beach. This place is busting wide open, and the gays are carving up a section for themselves."⁶⁹ Schlutz did his own carving up during these heady years. He bought several restaurants and clubs on the New York Avenue strip and waited along with others for the big payday to come.

Once the city zoned New York Avenue for casino development, the pace of change quickened. "Everybody got a little greedy," one New York Avenue visitor remembered. Cover charges jumped and the price of drinks doubled. The rooming houses joined the rush to get rich. During the early 1970s, these plain, narrow, three-story buildings on New York Avenue and Snake Alley charged as little as \$80 to \$100 per person for a weeklong stay. Because rooms were relatively cheap, Atlantic City was accessible to gay men from all walks of life. When the casinos opened, the rooming house operators charged the same rate for one night as they previously had for an entire week. "That's what's destroying the street," one man insisted at the time. "There are no more cheap hotel rooms where people can stay." Other guest house owners did not drastically raise their rates. They kept the prices low but let their buildings rot. One man thought he could smell the sweat and mildew from one of the older gay-owned New York Avenue hotels from the street. He ended up staying a few blocks away. Why fix up an aging wooden guesthouse, some owners thought, when a developer was sure to buy it and immediately tear it down? It was, after all, the land, not the houses and hotels, that mattered most in this new, real-life game of Monopoly. Property owners on the street were convinced in the late 1970s that it was just a matter of time before they would be bought out. So they waited along with everyone else in Atlantic City for the man with the big check to come.⁷⁰

While just about all of the businesspeople along New York Avenue waited for their payday, several buildings along the street mysteriously burned. Maybe one or two of these fires happened by accident, but arsonists probably set most of them. No one was ever caught, but it was common knowledge that property owners paid young kids and would-be gangsters to torch aging homes and guesthouses. By getting rid of the buildings, they lowered their tax bills

while they waited for the developer to come knocking. A few others demolished aging structures and converted their properties into casino parking lots as they bided their time. Together the fires and demolitions ripped holes in the fabric of the street. Where there was once a continuous flow of buildings along New York Avenue, now there were huge gaps.⁷¹

Finally, the developers did come calling, carrying with them detailed scale models and big promises. In 1979, Atlantic Land Limited opened an office near the New York Avenue gay strip and started to map out a bright, prosperous future for the area. According to its drafts, the company planned to build a \$130 million, 31-story art deco hotel with 504 rooms and 60,000 square feet of casino space. The blueprints made space for a 1,000-seat showroom, a fifth-floor weight room, a swimming pool, a health club, and tennis courts on the roof. The company's drawings also hinted at an eventual expansion of the project to include another 750 rooms and even more casino space. By July 1980, however, Atlantic Land Limited's Atlantic City office was closed. A "For Rent" sign was wedged in the corner of the window, and no one answered the telephone.⁷²

Other firms promised to finish the project, but none did. A few years later, another out-of-town company bought up property around New York Avenue and proposed a sweeping scheme to turn several Boardwalk blocks into a sparkling hotel and shopping complex for gamblers and their families modeled along the lines of New Orleans's French Quarter. By 1986, the project's leading investor was wanted by the Internal Revenue Service, U.S. Justice Department, New Jersey State Police, and Manhattan District Attorney's Office. The properties he purchased were left abandoned and neglected, more ugly reminders of the feverish race for riches touched off by the gambling gold rush.⁷³

As New York Avenue business leaders waited for the big payday and watched buildings on the street disappear, the city's gay scene slowly and relentlessly declined.⁷⁴ By the early 1980s, it was clear that the area had changed. As a casino-building boom clogged the streets of Atlantic City with buses, limousines, cement trucks, and cranes, New York Avenue grew quieter each day. Ten years after the first casino opened, five or six gay bars and a couple of "gay-orientated" gift shops remained in business in the area. On weekends, drag queens still roamed the beach in front of the Claridge and still strutted up and down New York Avenue at night, but the days of the big street parties were clearly in the past. It was just a matter of time before all of the bars closed; they couldn't compete with the casinos. No one could. The casinos were all encompassing. Each had several bars, two or three lounges, four or five restaurants, hundreds of brand-new rooms, entertainment, and, of course, endless rows of slot machines and blackjack tables. Casino managers spent millions to make sure people didn't leave their windowless, clockless places to eat along the Boardwalk or shop on Atlantic Avenue. And they were largely successful. Gay and straight gamblers drove their cars to town, parked in

towering multistory casino garages, ate at casino buffets, drank in casino bars or on the casino floor, and then left town five hours later.

In this climate of hit-and-run tourism, the street celebrations of 1976 gave way to nagging despair. By the early 1980s, the city's small business owners were in rapid retreat. Almost two hundred restaurants went out of business in the ten years after the casinos came to town. Gambling managed to do what even white flight and disinvestment could not completely do; it crushed Atlantic City's once-thriving independent business sector. Restaurants and motels could not match the casinos' free drink, food, and room giveaways, and in a ruthless economic game of the survival of the fittest, they disappeared.⁷⁵

By the mid-1980s, things were just as bleak in the city's gay business district as elsewhere. "It wasn't until the end of '84, beginning of '85," recalls one man thinking about New York Avenue, "that bars, hotels, and shops began to close down, go out of business or sell their property to investors."⁷⁶ By then, AIDS haunted New York Avenue as it did gay communities everywhere. With no mercy and even less grace, the disease killed countless members of the "Sex, Drugs, and Disco" generation that built Atlantic City's gay scene. Maybe just as important, AIDS redirected the focus of the gay community. The bar no longer served as the single most important institution in gay life. The focus of gay politics shifted as well. Sex no longer seemed so liberating to some. To others, monogamy and staying in replaced going out and cruising. As more gay men looked inward, fewer were out at the bars and discos. At the same time, much of the energy of the Atlantic City gay community, as was the case with other gay communities, focused on providing services for their members stricken with the deadly virus.⁷⁷

By the end of the 1980s, conditions on New York Avenue were not much better than in the rest of the city. It seemed like it was just a matter of time before the gay scene along the street breathed its final breath. The Chez Paree, one of the bars that turned gay in the late 1960s, turned back to a straight club in the 1980s. The last gay bar on the street, the Rendezvous, closed in the mid-1990s. Later it reopened as a straight strip bar. Much of the gay scene, meanwhile, moved out of the city to the suburbs. In town, there is a gay bar on South Carolina Avenue and a couple more gay bars, owned by John Schultz, on Mt. Vernon Street, near New York Avenue. This narrow thoroughfare, more like an alley than a city street, with a few faded rainbow banners, is still home to the Brass Rail as well as Studio Six and Surfside Resort Hotel, a gay hotel.⁷⁸

Today New York Avenue is gone. There is no gay scene there. Actually there is almost nothing there to remind people of the past. The street looks like an abandoned movie set on the backlot of a Hollywood studio. A clump of aging row houses that look like they are from another era stand on one side of the street. A couple of buildings in this cluster still have stores, like Le Boote Hair Design, on the bottom floor. Most, however, are boarded up. Mama Motts, the Italian restaurant with red-and-white checked tablecloths, remains

open in the middle of the block, but Billy Mott and the black velvet paintings are gone and so are the crowds. Near the beach, Deja Vu sells Miller Lites for two dollars a bottle and piña coladas for four dollars a glass, but no one seems to notice. On the other end of the street, across from where Val's used to be, is Naked City, another strip club for straight men. Where the Lark and the Chester were located, there is almost nothing. By the Boardwalk stands Atlantic Place, a newfangled-looking hotel and time-share condominium. But that's it. The rest of the block is a gloomy collection of parking lots and litter-filled land razed for redevelopment that so far hasn't taken place and may never happen. These chunks of empty space give the street an eerie stillness and, for those who know what was there, a heavy sense of sadness for what has been lost.

"New York Avenue . . . that was our childhood," a Philadelphia man who came out in the late 1950s, recently said, "that's where we grew up." "We had a good time while it lasted," remarks another. "I lament Philadelphia's loss of a gay shore spot of our own," adds another man.⁷⁹ These memories, however, point to something more than nostalgia for a lost world. They underline forgotten stories about urban spaces. Cities are complicated, ever-changing places embodying the myriad experiences of diverse peoples. Only complicated, overlapping narratives can possibly capture this ballet of movement and cacophony of voices.

NOTES

1. John McPhee, "The Search for Marvin Gardens," in *The John McPhee Reader*, ed. William L. Howarth (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 1976), 309-20. The subtitle of my article is a play off of Jane Jacob's seminal book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961). See also Marc Stein's chapter, "The Death and Life of Public Space in the 'Private City,'" in his book, *City of Sisterly and Brotherly Loves: Lesbian and Gay Philadelphia, 1945-1972* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 84-112. In this chapter, Stein uses Jacob's language to talk about the exuberance and vibrancy of gay life in Philadelphia. The same descriptive phrases used by Stein could, quite aptly, be used to describe Atlantic City in the 1970s.

2. Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Jon Teaford, *The Rough Road to Renaissance: Urban Revitalization in America, 1940-1985* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1990); Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

3. Robert A. Beauregard makes a similar point in his essay, "Voices of Decline," in *Readings in Urban Theory*, eds. Susan Fainstein and Scott Campbell (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1996), 363-66. For more suggestions on ways to see cities, see Max Page, "Four Ways to Looking at City Building in America," *Journal of Urban History* 25 (September 1999), 848-59.

4. For some key works on gay tourism, see Brivel Holcomb and Michael Luongo, "Gay Tourism in the United States," *Annals of Tourism Research* 23 (July 1996): 711-14; Ester Newton, *Cherry Grove, Fire Island: Sixty Years in America's First Gay and Lesbian Town* (Boston: Beacon, 1993); Robert Aldrich, *The Seduction of the Mediterranean: Writing, Art, and Homosexuality* (New York: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1993); and Karen C. Krahulik, "Cape Queer: The Politics of Sex, Race, and Class in Provincetown, Massachusetts, 1859-1999" (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 2000).

5. For more on the intersections between gay and urban studies, see David Bell and Gill Valentine, *Mapping Desire: Geographies of Sexualities* (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1995); and David Higgs, *Queer Sites: Gay Urban Histories* (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1999). For a model local study of gay

urban life with a strong emphasis on politics rather than the local economy, see John D'Emilio, "Gay Politics and Community in San Francisco Since World War II," *Socialist Review* 55 (January 1981): 77-104. See also studies focusing on the "making" of gay communities in postwar America: Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1993); Daniel Burning, *Lesbian and Gay Memphis: Building Communities behind the Magnolia Curtain* (New York: Garland, 1997); Stein, *Brotherly Loves*; and in particular the essays in Brett Beemyn, *Creating a Place for Ourselves: Lesbians, Gay, and Bisexual Community Histories* (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1997). Finally, for scholarship that does explore the connections between gay spaces and economics, see some of the work on urban gentrification: Stein, *Brotherly Loves*, 25-26, and Bell and Valentine, *Mapping Desire*, 325-53.

6. On resorts as fantasy spots, see Susan Fainstein and David Gladstone, "Evaluating Urban Tourism," in *The Tourist City*, eds. Dennis R. Judd and Susan Fainstein (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 21, and John Hannigan, *Fantasy City: Pleasure and Profit in the Postmodern Metropolis* (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1998), 7. On the fantasy world of Coney Island, see John Kasson, *Amusing the Millions: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978); David Nasaw, *Going Out: The Rise and Fall of Public Amusements* (New York: Basic Books, 1993); and Woody Register, *The Kid of Coney Island: Fred Thompson and the Rise of American Amusements* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). For more on Fire Island, see Newton, *Cherry Grove*.

7. For more on the history of the class makeup of Atlantic City tourists, see Charles E. Funnell, *By the Beautiful Sea* (New York: Knopf, 1975), 144. For a broader sense of the importance of class and the makeup of resorts in America, see Nasaw, *Going Out*, and Cindy S. Aron, *Working at Play: A History of Vacations in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

8. Interview with Dian Spitzer, January 27, 1999.

9. On movie palaces and fantasy architecture, see Ben M. Hall, *The Best Remaining Seats: The Golden Age of the Movie Palace* (1975; rpt. ed., New York: De Capo, 1987); David Naylor, *American Picture Palaces: The Architecture of Fantasy* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1981); and Karen J. Safer, "The Functions of Decoration in the American Movie Palace," *Marquee* (Second Quarter, 1982). On the Warner, see Irvin R. Glazer, "The Atlantic City Story," *Marquee* (First and Second Quarters, 1980): 6.

10. Interview with Spitzer.

11. On the ordinance, see "City Moves Against Bathers, Scantily-Clad Using 'Walk,'" *Atlantic City Press*, July 19, 1951, Vertical Files—Boardwalk, Heston Room, ACPL; and "Bathing Rule Passes but Will It Stay?" *Atlantic City Press*, August 16, 1963. For more on the woman reprimanded, see *New York Times*, August 3, 1951.

12. Interview with Denny and Marlene Faust, August 22, 1999. See also the posting from Deb Yadnak, Thursday, September 28, 2000 at iloveac.com/memory.shtml.

13. Wilson quoted in Martin Paulson, *The Social Anxieties of Progressive Reform: Atlantic City, 1854-1920* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 9.

14. For more on the perception of resorts as places where danger and lust lurked, see Aron, *Working at Play*, 99.

15. For more on prostitution, see interview with Chester (anonymous) by Cynthia Ringe, May 23, 1978, Atlantic City Living History, Heston Room, Atlantic City Free Public Library, Atlantic City, New Jersey (herein ACPL); and Bert Wilson, "The Atlantic City Trivia Quiz: And the Answers," *Atlantic City Press*, January 29, 1984. On New York Avenue and Snake Alley, see Rick Murray, "Cab Driver Tells Where Action Was Around Town," *Atlantic City Press*, May 8, 1987.

16. On clothing and the marking of sexual preference, see George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Urban Culture and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 3, 4, 52.

17. Debbie Doyle, "The Salt Water Washes Away All Impropriety": The Middle-Class Body on the Beach and Mass Culture in Turn-of-the-Century Atlantic City" (unpublished article in author's possession), and "El Paso Hands It to Atlantic City," *New York Times*, May 17, 1925. Debbie Doyle graciously provided me with both of these citations.

18. On the importance of gay clubs being inconspicuous and out of the way, see Jeffrey Escoffier, *American Homo: Community and Perversity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 72-73.

19. On the scene around New York Avenue, see telephone interview with Betty Walls, January 18, 2001; Paulson, *The Social Anxieties of Progressive Reform*, 94; "Padlock Shore Places," *Philadelphia Bulletin*, August 12, 1929; and Murray, "Cab Driver Tells Where Action Was."

20. Elaine Rose, "Atlantic City of Yesteryear: Gone and All but Forgotten," *Atlantic City Press*, April 27, 1997.

21. Glen Duffy, "Goodbye to Gay Street," *Atlantic City* (November 1986): 55.
22. Bill Kent, "The Queen of New York Avenue," *Atlantic City* (August 1984): 99, and Ann Kolson, "Faded," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 10, 1982. See also interview with Herb Tapper, February 26, 2000.
23. Interview with Walls.
24. For descriptions of the club, see interview with Tapper and telephone interview with Mike Mann, February 22, 2000.
25. Kent, "The Queen of New York Avenue," 99.
26. On house parties, see Burning, *Lesbian and Gay Memphis*, 33, and Howard, "Place and Movement in Gay American History," in *Creating a Place for Ourselves*, 213.
27. See a specific reference to Atlantic City in Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 321. For more on these bars, see "Atlantic City Clubs All Dark: Mayor Bans Pansies," *Variety*, January 17, 1933, 55. (This article is cited by Chauncey.) See also "Shore Night Clubs Warned," *Philadelphia Bulletin*, June 23, 1945.
28. John D'Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 291, and Escoffier, *American Homo*, 71-72.
29. "Candy Boardwalk Revisited: Atlantic City Remembers Its Part in World War II," November 2-4, 1986, Vertical File, Atlantic City, General #5, Atlantic County Historical Society, and Bill Kent, Robert Ruffolo, and Laurala Dobbins, *Atlantic City: America's Playground* (Encinitas, California: Heritage Media Corporation, 1998), 144-55.
30. Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War II* (New York: Free Press, 1990), 256; D'Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 260-61, 288-89; and Escoffier, *American Homo*, 75-77.
31. Bérubé, *Coming Out under Fire*, 123; Kent, "The Queen of New York Avenue," 99; and interview with John Schulz, September 24, 1999.
32. On the increased visibility of gay life in the postwar period, see the comparable scene in Flint, Michigan, in Tim Retzlaff, "Cars and Bars: Assembling Gay Men in Postwar Flint, Michigan," in *Creating a Place for Ourselves*, 231.
33. For a survey of postwar gay life, see Jerry "Jai" Moore, "The Lady Jai Recommended List," c. 1954, in author's possession. (Tim Retzlaff graciously provided me with a copy of this list.) According to this simple, mimeographed list, Louisa's was the only "all the way" gay bar in town. For the location of the clubs, see *Atlantic City Director* (R. L. Polk and Company, 1956).
34. On Snug Harbor, see interview with Tapper.
35. Berubé, *Coming Out under Fire*, 258-59; George Chauncey, "The Postwar Sex Crime Panic," in *True Stories from the American Past*, ed. William Graebner (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1997), 160-78; and Jonathan Katz, *Gay American History: Lesbians and Gay Men in the U.S.A.* (New York: Thomas Crowell, 1976), 109.
36. Minutes of Commissioners, June 22, 1951, pp. 590-91, City Clerk's Office, Atlantic City, New Jersey.
37. Minutes of Commissioners, February 19, 1953, p. 127, City Clerk's Office, Atlantic City, New Jersey.
38. *New York Times*, April 12, 1956.
39. Telephone interview with Don Pigolet, February 13, 2000.
40. Interview with Schlitz. For more on harassment, see Duberman, *Stonewall*.
41. "Bars Challenge State Ruling on Homosexuals," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, September 3, 1967. For more on the general national legal trends and on New Jersey law, see William N. Eskridge Jr., "Challenging the Apartheid of the Closet: Establishing Conditions for Lesbian and Gay Intimacy, Nomos, and Citizenship, 1961-1981," *Hofstra Law Review* 25 (1997): 872; and Eskridge, *Gaylaw: Challenging the Apartheid of the Closet* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 46.
42. For more on early Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC) raids, see *One Eleven Wines & Liquors, Inc. v. Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control*, 50 N.J. 329, 235, A.2d 12. On the closing of Louisa's by the city, see Minutes of Commissioners, November 10, 1955, p. 116, City Clerk's Office, Atlantic City, New Jersey. See also "Club Is Closed for 240 Days at Atlantic City," *Philadelphia Bulletin*, May 3, 1963.
43. For a survey of Atlantic City gay bars, see *International Guild Guide* (1966), 85; *International Guild Guide* (1967), 87-88; "The Lavender Baedeker '66" (1966), 15, all from Special Collections, University of Chicago.
44. Descriptions of Val's have come from interviews with Mann and Pigolet.

45. On the lead-up to the Val's case, see *One Eleven Wines & Liquors, Inc. v. Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control*, 50 N.J. 329, 235, A.2d 12; Stein, *City of Sisterly and Brotherly Loves*, 282; and Eskridge, *Gaylaw*, 112. For more on the statewide crackdown, see *Drum*, April 1966, October 1967, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered Archives of Philadelphia, William Way Community Center, Philadelphia, PA (herein GLBTA).

46. *One Eleven Wines & Liquors, Inc. v. Division of Alcoholic Beverage Control*, 50 N.J. 329, 235, A.2d 12. N.J. Court Permits Homosexuals in Bars," *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, November 12, 1967; "Ruling Affects Homosexuals," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 7, 1967; "High Court of NJ Overturns a Ban on Homosexuality," *New York Times*, November 7, 1967. See also Stein, *City of Sisterly and Brotherly Loves*, 283, 423-33.

47. On the impact of Val's challenge to the ABC, see interview with Michael Mann, February 28, 2000, and Kolson, "Faded." One guide published in 1967 noted that Val's was "very popular." See Bob Danzon's *Address Book 1968* (San Francisco: Pan-Graphic Press, 1967), 56. Special Collection, University of Chicago.

48. Interview with Michael Mann, February 28, 2000; *Seagull*, Memorial Day, 1977, Vertical Files, File, Gay and Lesbian Community, Heston Room, ACFPL; and Kolson, "Faded." According to available guides, the Fort Pitts had been a gay bar in the early 1960s, and then, it seems, it switched back to being a straight bar, maybe when Stockton College came to Atlantic City. And then it switched back again to being a gay bar after Val's won its court case. In the 1964 and 1966 guild guides, the Fort Pitts is listed as a gay bar. It is omitted from the 1967 guide, and then in 1971, it is again listed as a gay bar. This seems to confirm Mann's story about the bar. For guides, see *International Guild Guide* (1964), 54; *International Guild Guide* (1966), 85; *International Guild Guide* (1967); and *International Guild Guide* (1971), 66 (this also has information on the rooming houses). Special Collections, University of Chicago.

49. Kolson, "Faded." On Cape May and Rehoboth, see *Drum*, August 1965, September 1965, GLBTA. For an example from the antigay campaign in New York City, see "2 Clubs Catering to Homosexuals Closed by Police," *New York Times*, November 26, 1967.

50. Many others make the argument about planes, air conditioning, and swimming pools killing Atlantic City. For the best accounts, see Peter B. Brophy, "A People Which No Longer Remembers Has Lost Its History and Soul," *Atlantic City Press*, June 25, 1978, and Anthony J. Kutscher, "Atlantic City: A Victim of Technology?" Vertical Files, Atlantic City General, 8, Atlantic County Historical Museum, Somers Point, New Jersey. On white flight and desegregation in Atlantic City, see Martin Sherman, *Rose* (London: Methuen, 1999), 32; Warren B. Murphy and Frank Stevens, *Atlantic City* (Los Angeles: Pinnacle Books, 1979), 106, 126, 220-21; "City's History Rich and Diverse," *Asbury Park Press*, November 20, 1987, Heston Room, Vertical Files—Travel and Tourism, Folder, 1980s, ACFPL; Atlantic City, New Jersey; and Funnell, *By the Beautiful Sea*, 157-58. See also interview with Leslie Kammerman, Cynthia Ridge, n.d., Atlantic City Living History, Oral History Project, Heston Room, ACFPL. A longtime Atlantic City resident, Kammerman sees a direct and clear connection between white flight and neighborhood decay. On white flight and tourism, see Hannigan, *Fantasy City*, 190, and Nasaw, *Going Out*, 252-55. On urban spaces and white flight, see Ray Suarez, *The Old Neighborhood: What We Lost in the Great Suburban Migration*, 1966-1999 (New York: Free Press) and Teaford, *The Rough Road to Renaissance*, 125-26.

51. On massive resistance in the North, see, for instance, Jonathan Rieder, *Canarsie: The Jews and Italians of Brooklyn against Liberalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985); Thomas Sugrue, "Crab-Grass Roots Politics: Race, Rights, and the Reaction against Liberalism in the Urban North, 1940-1961," *Journal of American History* 82 (September 1995): 551-86; and Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*.

52. Interview with James Usry, originally from Athens, Georgia, September 30, 1999; Louis Emanuel, "CORE Breaks Off Hotel Job Talks," *Atlantic City Press*, March 11, 1966; and Brad Bennett, "Civil Rights Movement Has Long History in A.C.," *Atlantic City Press*, February 21, 1993.

53. U.S. Bureau of Census, *1970 Census of Population*, vol. 1, part 32 (Washington, D.C., 1973), 14-15. On poverty and race in the city, see Elwood Davis, "Poverty in Atlantic City and Atlantic County" (Atlantic Human Resource, Inc., 1965, in author's possession), and Eliot Michael Friedlander, "Death of the 'World's Playground': An Examination of the Decline and Fall of Atlantic City, New Jersey" (M.A. thesis, Glassboro State College, 1972).

54. On emptiness and gay space, see John Petsinger to author, February 17, 2000; interview with Tapper; and interview with Robert Beakley, August 16, 1999. For some details about the scene at the start of the 1970s, see Gaeton Fonzi and Bernard McCormick, "Bust-Out Town," *Philadelphia Magazine* (August 1970): 118-19.

55. Escoffier, *American Homo*, 72-73. On harassment, see interviews with Schlutz and Petsinger to author. On Mafia control of gay bars in New York, see Duberman, *Stonewall*, 115-16.

56. Petsinger to author, February 17, 2000, and GITANO to author, February 9, 2000 (this correspondence was through e-mail).

57. On the beach scene, see interviews with Schlutz and Tapper.

58. Kent, "The Queen of New York Avenue," 99; and Duffy, "Goodbye to Gay Street." For a map of the New York Avenue scene, see the local gay newsletter, *Seagull*, Memorial Day, 1977, and the map, "For Our Visiting Friends," *Seagull*, August 11, 1978, Vertical Files, File, Gay and Lesbian Community, Heston Room, ACFPL. See also *Gay Yellow Pages* (spring and summer 1976), 57, and *Bob Dorman's Address Book* '79, 222-24, GLBTA. For more, including information on Mama Moti's, see *International Guild Guide* (1971), 66, Special Collection, University of Chicago, and interview with Beakley. On the Metropolitan Church, see the *Seagull*, Memorial Day, 1977, cited above, and *New Wave*, the publication of the Metropolitan Church of Atlantic City, July 1981, Vertical Files, GLBTA. (By then, the church had moved to North Indiana Avenue.)

59. Quote from D'Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 355.

60. Fonzi and McCormick, "Bust-Out Town," 118-19.

61. Michael Checchio, "Boys for Sale," *Atlantic City Press*, September 1, 1977, and Ed Hitzel, "A.C.'s Boardwalk: Has It Changed?" *Atlantic City Press*, August 19, 1979.

62. HT to author, February 22, 2000 (e-mail correspondence); interview with Pigolet; and telephone interview with Bruce Cahan, March 10, 2000.

63. Interviews with Mann and Pigolet. Frank Prendergast, "Merchant Says 'Walk a Disgrace,'" *Atlantic City Press*, August 28, 1971, and Checchio, "Boys for Sale," *Atlantic City Press*. Elmore Leonard comments on the availability of drugs along New York Avenue in his novel, *Glitz* (New York: Arbor House, 1985), 172.

64. Fonzi and McCormick, "Bust-Out Town," 118-19; Kent, "The Queen of New York Avenue," 99; and interview by the author with Rees Palley, September 12, 1999. See also the local gay newsletter, *Seagull*, Memorial Day, 1977, and "For Our Visiting Friends," *Seagull*, August 11, 1978, Vertical Files, File, Gay and Lesbian Community, Heston Room, ACFPL.

65. Interviews with Mann, Tapper, Beakley, and Palley.

66. On the city's promotional efforts, see "Times Square Signs," *Atlantic City Press*, March 31, 1957, Vertical File, "History of Atlantic City: Publicity and Promotional Materials," Heston Collection, ACFPL; "Canadian Week Plans Are Set," Greater Atlantic City Chamber of Commerce, *Action*, June 1966, Greater Atlantic City Chamber of Commerce, Atlantic City, New Jersey; "Seatorium Project Set for Atlantic City Awash in Red Tape," *Atlantic City Press*, November 2, 1967, Vertical Files, Amusements, Boardwalk Rides, etc., Heston Room, ACFPL; on the RV Park, Michael Checchio, "Campers Backed by Hamid," *Atlantic City Press*, March 2, 1975; memo, February 28, 1975, Box, Proposed Developers/Marketing Campaign, File—Trav-L-Park, Atlantic City Housing Authority; on the ski hill, newsletter, Urban Renewal Citizens Committee, March 8, 1967, Box 4, File: Hamid, UR 115, Atlantic City Housing Authority; and on the "barrio" idea, "Atlantic City: The Queen Takes a Chance," Produced and Directed by Albert Rose, Tape, 90-41B, September 19, 1978, Heston Room, ACFPL.

67. For more on urban renewal, see Bryant Simon, "The Modern Wisdom of Pauline Hill: Urban Renewal and the Destruction of Atlantic City, 1960-1999" (paper delivered at Everyday Modernism: A Conference on the Social in Modern Design, Architecture, and Landscape, University of California, Riverside, September 2000, in author's possession).

68. For more on campaigns, see George Sternlieb and James W. Huges, *The Atlantic City Gamble* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983); John Dombrowski and William N. Thompson, *The Last Resort: Success and Failure in Campaigns for Casinos* (Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 1990), chap. 2; and Geoffrey Douglas, "The Selling of Casino Gambling," *New Jersey Monthly* (January 1977): 21-24.

69. Patrick Pachec, "Restoration of the Queen of Resorts," *After Dark* (August 1978): 40.

70. Kent, "The Queen of New York Avenue," 99, and Kathy Brennan, "The Thrill Is Gone," *Atlantic City Press*, August 10, 1986.

71. On fires in the city in the late 1970s and early 1980s, see interview with PC, an Atlantic City firefighter, September 22, 1999, and Ursula Obst, "The Myth, Realities," *Atlantic City Press*, June 9, 1981.

72. On the casino plans for the street, see interview with Schlutz; Patrick Jenkins, "\$135M Casino Gets Board OK," *Atlantic City Press*, November 22, 1979; and Daniel Heneghan, "Casino Update," *Atlantic City Press*, July 6, 1980.

73. On NATCO, see Donald Janson, "3-Black Rebuilding Due in Atlantic City," *New York Times*, January 12, 1986; Michael Checchio and Joseph Coccaro, "A.C. Boardwalk Project Facing Federal Takeover,"

Atlantic City Press, August 1, 1986; and George Anastasia and Fen Montaigne, "An \$82 Million Broken Promise," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 15, 1986.

74. Elaine Rose, "Atlantic City of Yesteryear," *Atlantic City Press*, April 27, 1997.

75. On the demise of local restaurants, see Victoria Foote, "Casinos' Success Is Bad Luck for Other A.C. Spots," *Restaurant Exchange News* 6 (November 1984), Misc. Files, Greater Atlantic City Chamber of Commerce, and Robert Goodman, *The Luck Business: The Devastating Consequences and Broken Promises of America's Gambling Explosion* (New York: Free Press, 1995), 21-23.

76. James to author (e-mail correspondence), February 27, 2000. See also *Bob Darmon's Address Book* '85, 309-11, GLBTA.

77. Brennan, "The Thrill Is Gone," and Escoffier, *American Homo*. 66. Organizations such as the South Jersey AIDS Alliance have taken shape over the past few years. See the emphasis on AIDS-related activism in *New Jersey Alternative* (May 1985), Vertical Files, Guy and Lesbian Community, Heston Room, ACFPL.

78. Kolson, "Faded." For information on the Mt. Vernon Avenue scene, see www.studiosix.com. See also *Damron's Road Atlas* (San Francisco: Damron Co., 2000), 196-97.

79. Interviews with Tapper and Pigot.